



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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For immediate release

Jan. 11, 2012

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Season's First Case of Influenza Confirmed in County

Lewis and Clark County has learned of its first case of flu this season, the health department reported Wednesday.

The Public Health Laboratory at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services confirmed the case Tuesday. It's the fourth case of influenza in the state so far this season. Three cases occurred in Gallatin and Lake counties in December.

All four cases have been H3 strains of influenza A, and the first three were confirmed as being a virus strain contained in this year's flu vaccine.

Flu, or influenza, is highly contagious and can cause severe disease in high-risk populations like young children, the elderly, and people with chronic health conditions such as heart and lung disease and diabetes. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Flu may also worsen underlying chronic medical conditions.

People with flu can spread it to others up to three feet away. Most experts believe flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets expelled when people cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can contaminate surfaces and be spread by touching those surfaces or by directly inhaling the droplets.

"A flu shot is the best protection against influenza, and it's not too late to benefit from one this season," said Karen Dobson, public health nurse at the health department. "Now that we know there's flu in our community, it's a good time to remind people of simple prevention measures to reduce our chance of getting the flu."

These include:

- Wash your hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

If you do get sick, stay home and limit your contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.

The health department offers immunizations on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1930 Ninth Avenue. No appointment is needed.

For more information, call the health department's flu hotline at 457-8904 or visit www.lewisandclarkhealth.org.

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